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# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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**Committee on the Rights of the Child**
**Seventy-seventh session**

**Summary record of the 2254th meeting**
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 15 January 2018, at 3 p.m.

*Chair*: Ms. Winter

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports of States parties**

*Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Sri Lanka* (CRC/C/LKA/5-6; CRC/C/LKA/Q/5-6 and CRC/C/LKA/Q/5-6/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Sri Lanka took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Senaratne** (Sri Lanka), introducing her country's combined fifth and sixth periodic reports (CRC/C/LKA/5-6), said that her Government appreciated the Committee's work in upholding the child rights agenda. As one of the earliest signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Sri Lanka had long recognized the significance of that instrument, especially given that approximately 30 per cent of its population were children.

3. Following the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2015, the President of Sri Lanka had delivered a policy statement setting out the objective of building a better future for children and ensuring their security. To that end, the country had increased its engagement with the United Nations system in recent years, participating in eight reviews by treaty bodies and hosting visits by eight special procedure mandate holders. Sri Lanka had also become a party to six international treaties on human rights and humanitarian disarmament, some of which directly related to safeguarding the rights of children.

4. At the national level, the Government vigorously pursued the full realization and promotion of the rights recognized in the Convention and the two Optional Protocols thereto through appropriate legal reforms and new policies. In 2016, it had raised the minimum age for leaving compulsory education from 14 to 16 years. The Cabinet had approved an increase in the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years, and a bill for the judicial protection of children had been drafted in order to comply with international standards on the best interests of the child. Moreover, the Government had approved new guidelines for the operation of day-care centres in order to ensure a secure environment for the children of working mothers. Children's rights were addressed under a number of policies and action plans, including those on human rights, sexual and gender-based violence, elimination of child labour, early childhood care and development, child health, and child protection. In 2017 the President had appointed the members of the National Monitoring Committee on Child Rights to ensure the effective coordination of those policies and plans.

5. The State had advanced in the protection and promotion of the rights of the child through progressive policies such as the provision of free universal primary and secondary education and free health care. Thanks to rapid economic growth and development, the country's social and human development indicators had either equalled or outperformed those of its peers, with rates of poverty and under-5 mortality in retreat. Primary-school enrolment was nearly universal and secondary-school enrolment was high, while only 1 per cent of the child population was thought to engage in child labour. Furthermore, the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs held annual consultations with children's clubs, allowing children to express their views and contribute to policymaking.

6. Aware that the rights of many children were not sufficiently protected, the Government sought to meet that challenge by maintaining a zero-tolerance policy on violence against children and bringing perpetrators to justice as swiftly as possible. The National Child Protection Authority operated a toll-free child helpline through which it received complaints from the public concerning child abuse, which it referred to the relevant authorities for investigation. Complaints involving children were also investigated by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and by the Women and Children's Bureaux that had been established in police stations. Nevertheless, the Government required support in terms of capacity-building in that area. Furthermore, it was determined to tackle the issue of corporal punishment.

7. As it emerged from its lengthy internal conflict, Sri Lanka was taking steps to normalize the lives of children in war-affected areas. To improve their well-being and to

guarantee that they enjoyed the same rights as the rest of the population, the Government had taken measures such as democratic reforms, the gradual and regular release of land to its rightful owners, the resettlement of internally displaced families and demining activities.

8. Notwithstanding the progress made, new challenges, such as the online safety of children and the rise of artificial intelligence, which might make it harder for young people to find jobs and achieve independence, continued to emerge almost daily. The delegation of Sri Lanka hoped that the Committee's recommendations would assist the Government in carrying forward progressive steps for the promotion and protection of children's rights.

9. **Ms. Sandberg** (Coordinator, Country Task Force), commending the State party for the positive steps it had taken, said that the Committee was grateful for the information provided on the current situation in the country. Nevertheless, the Committee had the impression that children were not fully recognized as rights holders and that their rights and interests were considered inferior to those of adults; if that was so, she would welcome an indication of what could be done to address the situation. Regarding legislation, it was unclear whether the Convention was fully applicable by the courts; since Sri Lanka was a dualist country, an explanation was needed of the steps the State party had taken or would take to incorporate the Convention into domestic law. More specifically, she asked whether the Children (Judicial Protection) Bill of 2015 had been adopted and, if not, why the legislative process was so slow.

10. The Committee appreciated the revival of the National Monitoring Committee on Child Rights and the authority vested in it, and wished to know how often it met. Given the reported lack of coordination between health and education authorities, information might be provided on how the Government ensured intersectoral coordination between line ministries and vertical coordination between the national, provincial and local levels, for example in the child protection system. Was the National Child Protection Authority, having been placed under the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, able to operate independently and coordinate with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services? Welcoming the National Plan of Action for Children, she asked what results had been observed by the National Monitoring Committee on Child Rights, which was supposed to carry out quarterly and annual reviews of progress under the Plan. How soon might the national child protection policy be adopted?

11. Regarding the allocation of resources, she was concerned that there was no general budget for child rights and that the budgeting process lacked transparency; accordingly, she wished to know what improvements were envisaged and whether the State party had referred to the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights. Similarly, she would welcome an explanation of reports that the National Child Protection Authority had spent only 20 per cent of its 2017 budget.

12. In the sphere of data collection, the fragmentation of existing systems and the lack of disaggregated data on children had serious implications for the exercise of their rights. What plans were in place to establish a comprehensive data-collection system for children's rights?

13. Noting that efforts were under way to strengthen the independence of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, she asked whether that institution had been or would seek to be accredited with A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. She was also interested to know why the Commission did not include a children's commissioner or unit, as previously recommended by the Committee. Did Sri Lankan children know about the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka? How did the State party plan to improve the dissemination of the Convention in schools? Having been informed that professionals working on children's rights had low levels of motivation, the Committee wished to know more about the training those professionals received and what could be done to improve their situation.

14. Noting that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on children's rights were required to register with the Ministry of Social Services, she asked what other requirements NGOs and faith-based organizations were required to fulfil and what safeguards were in place to hold them accountable and to prevent violations of children's

rights. The delegation might also comment on reports that human rights defenders faced harassment and that the police monitored political and civil society meetings.

15. Regarding the social and environment impacts of business activities, she asked whether companies were required to exercise due diligence or conduct impact assessments to determine how their activities affected children's rights. The Committee's general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights might prove useful in that context.

16. Finally, she wondered whether the State party had a national plan of action to enforce its zero-tolerance policy on sex tourism and whether it intended to specify a clear, consistent age of majority across all of its laws. Since there was no minimum age for marriage under Muslim law, she wished to know whether the committee established to consider the matter had submitted its report and whether any progress had been achieved. The Committee would be grateful for any updates on actions taken to improve Thesavalamai and Kandyan laws on marriage.

17. **Ms. Otani** (Country Task Force) said that, although she was grateful for the information on progress in eliminating discrimination against certain groups of children, she wished to know how the State party tackled discrimination against children belonging to ethnic or religious minorities, children of migrant workers, children in institutional care and children subjected to caste-based discrimination. Was the Government planning any measures to address discrimination and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children? She was especially concerned to note that the Government did not plan to remove the exception to the statutory rape provision of the Penal Code, whereby the provision did not apply to Muslim girls, until after the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act had been amended. Could the Government take a comprehensive approach so as to rectify all existing discriminatory laws against Muslim girls at the same time? Notwithstanding that the principle of non-discrimination was enshrined in the Constitution, she asked whether society accepted children's right to non-discrimination. What measures were needed to eliminate discrimination against children in vulnerable or disadvantaged situations?

18. Welcoming the incorporation of the principle of the best interests of the child in a number of laws, she cautioned that the application of the principle was more difficult. She requested information concerning efforts undertaken in that regard, such as the development of guidelines, tools or training for the relevant professionals.

19. Concerning the right to life, survival and development, the Committee noted the special measures taken for children affected by conflict but was seriously concerned about the risk posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance. Further information would be appreciated regarding the status of the demining process and efforts to educate children and families, especially those who had been internally displaced, about the risk. What assistance and rehabilitation were provided to child victims of landmine accidents?

20. She welcomed the island-wide consultation with children conducted in 2016 and asked whether the Government planned to reflect children's recommendations in future policies or activities. Were municipal-level platforms available to enable children, including those in vulnerable situations, to express their views on matters affecting them? She wondered whether families, schools and communities provided a supportive and enabling environment in which children were encouraged to express their views. Having failed to find information on children's right to be heard in judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them, she asked whether that right was guaranteed in the relevant legislation and implemented in practice. Lastly, she requested further details about the nature of the reconciliation programmes conducted in schools.

21. **Mr. Gastaud** (Country Task Force), noting with satisfaction that birth registration was compulsory in Sri Lanka, asked whether late registration was subject to penalties, whether birth certificates were issued free of charge, and what plans were in place to ensure that the small number of unregistered children could receive a birth certificate. He wondered how the Government intended to remedy the fact that, although section 365 of the Penal Code prohibited the publication of details on child victims of sexual offences, many newspapers published information, including photographs, on cases involving

children. He would be interested to hear the outcome of the discussions held in 2016 concerning guidelines on ethics in the media. Regarding freedom of expression, he would welcome further information on steps taken to prevent children from being exposed to inappropriate information and how the Right to Information Act (No. 12) of 2016 was applied to children. As to freedom of association, he wished to know more about the activities of the Children's Councils and how children were elected to them. He invited the delegation to report on any progress made in reviewing the Prevention of Terrorism Act, whose very broad definition of terrorist acts had resulted in the detention of a number of children.

22. **Ms. Aho Assouma** (Country Task Force) said that, despite the Government's recent commitment to ending corporal punishment, the practice remained widespread in all settings, and violence was a part of daily life for the country's children. She would be interested to know about any planned legislation to effectively address the problem and about the application of the 2005 circular issued by the Ministry of Education to ban corporal punishment, including any awareness-raising efforts or follow-up. She asked what actions had been undertaken to change behaviour and attitudes, and whether teachers received training on positive discipline. She wished to know about the measures taken, and budget allocated, to implement the 2016 action plan in that area. She requested further information on the free telephone hotline, including the number and types of cases reported, how cases were followed up and what support was provided to victims. She would welcome details on the number of prosecutions brought and the charges filed, as well as on the role, staff, budget and operations of the Women and Children's Police Desks.

23. She asked the delegation to comment on the action being taken to tackle the problem of sexual abuse and hazing in schools and to address the phenomenon of "beach boys" who engaged in prostitution in coastal areas. For example, was there a plan of action to combat sex tourism, were hotels involved and were predatory tourists prosecuted? She asked whether any research had been carried out into child pornography and the online exploitation of children and how the Government planned to tackle the phenomenon. She invited the delegation to comment on the widespread problem of impunity, which undermined public confidence in the authorities. She wished to know whether there were sufficient social workers to carry out the various programmes being undertaken, whether there was a capacity-building programme for social workers, and whether there were specialized structures and professionals to support victims throughout the country, even in remote areas.

24. With regard to allegations that Sri Lankan troops serving with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti had committed rape and sexual abuse, she wished to know whether the individuals concerned had been prosecuted and, if so, what the outcome had been and what reparations had been made to victims. She invited the delegation to comment on the lack of legal protection for boys who were victims of sexual violence, whether there were any monitoring mechanisms in places of detention, and what action was being taken to combat violence against girls. What action was the Government taking to combat the practices of female circumcision, child marriage and payment of dowries and to raise awareness of their harmful effects?

*The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4.25 p.m.*

25. **Ms. Jinasena** (Sri Lanka) said that, under the country's dualist system, incorporation of the Convention into domestic law required the enactment of specific legislation to fill gaps in existing national law. Sri Lanka had introduced several legislative provisions that reflected those of the Convention, including the chapter of the Constitution that concerned fundamental rights, which applied to both adults and children and reflected articles 2, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19 and 37 of the Convention. Article 27 of the Constitution provided that the State should recognize and protect the family as the basic unit of society and should take special care to promote the interests of children and youth so as to ensure their full physical, mental, moral, religious and social development and to protect them from exploitation and discrimination.

26. **Ms. de Livera** (Sri Lanka) said that the country's children, even those in remote areas, were conscious of the fact that they were rights holders. An activity book in Sinhala,

Tamil and English, which would be circulated to the Committee members, had been distributed to the 330 Child Rights Promotion Officers at the Divisional Secretariat level to help children understand their rights from a very young age. With regard to vertical coordination of programme delivery, the National Child Protection Authority worked very closely with the provincial educational authorities and with the District Secretariats. A recent review of the national child protection policy had shown that the policy's impact was not being felt by children owing to the lack of an effective implementation mechanism. A consultant had been hired to deliver a revised policy by April 2018. As chairperson of the National Child Protection Authority, she paid unannounced visits to the Divisional and District Secretariats to ensure the proper implementation of programmes. Child protection committees had been set up nationwide, even in small rural villages, and were raising public awareness through activities such as street theatre.

27. With regard to the allegations of abuse in a faith-based orphanage in a suburb of Colombo, the report of the initial inquiry into the matter had been unsatisfactory and appeared to cover up major problems. She had ordered a fresh report, including a psychosocial assessment of the children and interviews with people in the surrounding area. The issue of business and child rights had only recently come to the Authority's attention, but discussions were already under way with some of the major corporations in Sri Lanka on matters such as the impact of environmental pollution on children and the drafting of a code of conduct.

28. Regarding child sex tourism, the National Child Protection Authority had just completed a pilot project to provide training to school principals in coastal areas in the Northern Province. The participants had come up with innovative ideas, such as posting child rights information on lifeguard watchtowers and training lifeguards to report suspicious behaviour on their beaches. The proliferation of unlicensed bed-and-breakfast accommodations in coastal areas was problematic, but the Authority was working with the police, the tourism board and the hoteliers' association to place posters at all hotel reception desks nationwide, with a helpline number for reporting incidents involving children.

29. With regard to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children, the Authority had developed a programme that would be rolled out later that year with the National Institute of Education to train novice teachers on how to explain such differences to children using an educational video. The issue of circumcision of Muslim girls had been discussed in detail by the parliamentary oversight committee on gender and children. One possibility would be for the Authority's surveillance unit to carry out undercover visits to the areas reported by victims and civil society, using recording devices to gather evidence of the practice to support investigation and prosecution. Very recently, the Authority had been involved in a landmark case in which it had been granted custody of a child from an affluent background who had been subjected to severe cruelty and ill-treatment by her parents and had submitted repeated complaints against them to the Authority. It was thus clear that the Convention principles were woven into judicial decision-making, administrative structures, and policies and procedures. Training on the Convention was provided to lawyers, doctors and police officers and a new module on child sex trafficking had recently been launched.

30. In the coming years, action plans would focus more closely on needed efforts to improve the situation of children with disabilities. The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and the Ministry of Social Services, which was responsible for disability affairs, would cooperate to that end. Guidelines had been drafted to prevent child victims of crime from being exposed in the media; they were to be issued in February 2018.

31. In four of the country's districts, officials visited schools to talk about corporal punishment and how it was a violation of children's rights. There was a considerable backlog in the prosecution of cases of corporal punishment, but as a result of inter-agency efforts, which were supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the backlog was expected to be halved in six months. In addition, a senior prosecutor had been put in charge of the children's rights unit of the Attorney General's Department.

32. The National Child Protection Authority worked closely with the Sri Lanka Computer Emergency Readiness Team. A national database, which was to be launched

very shortly, would enable the child protection authorities to track complaints and would considerably speed up the investigation and prosecution of abuses against children. The National Child Protection Authority had received just over 9,000 complaints in 2017; allegations of cruelty were the most common reason for filing such complaints.

33. In one widely reported case, the authorities had taken civil action against a principal who had expelled a girl from school after having been falsely informed by a teacher that the girl was pregnant. A police investigation to determine whether the principal could face criminal charges was also under way.

34. **Ms. Sigera** (Sri Lanka) said that the voices of the children of Sri Lanka were heard, as the country had a well-developed system of children's clubs that were active from the village to the national level. The Government encouraged such participation, inter alia by providing financial and other support for child-led research.

35. In 2015, only 0.18 per cent of births in Sri Lanka had not been registered. Birth registration was free, and births in medical facilities were registered automatically. Parents of children born at home had seven days to register the birth with village authorities. Abandoned children received birth certificates that showed the probable date of birth and were as valid as other birth certificates.

36. **Ms. Senadheera** (Sri Lanka) said that the Family Health Bureau had a separate section for the provision of adolescent health services. A new action plan on adolescent health would be launched in the coming months, and standards for health services for adolescents and young people in Sri Lanka had been identified. Guidelines on providing reproductive health services to adolescents had also been produced, and Saturday clinics had been opened to provide health services to children and adolescents who were ordinarily in school during the week. A government website provided information about adolescent health services in Sinhalese, Tamil and English.

37. There were about 450 paediatricians in hospitals and other medical facilities around the country. Child protection was a component of the training they received as they prepared to exercise their profession. Emergency trauma centres in the country's hospitals provided care free of charge to accident victims, including children. The Department of Health was planning to hire a number of psychologists in the first half of 2018.

38. **Mr. Rathnayake** (Sri Lanka) said that when the country's civil war had ended in 2009, rehabilitation and reintegration services, including social and spiritual counselling, vocational training and sports activities, had been provided to nearly 600 former child soldiers, most of them male. The youngest had been 13. The authorities had concentrated on enabling them to complete the education they had been unable to obtain during the fighting, in the belief that an education would help them reclaim their place in civilian society. Relatively few had gone on to university, however.

39. Social and economic welfare coordination officers in the country's northern and eastern districts facilitated the reintegration of war veterans, including former child soldiers. Some former child soldiers, including women, had begun working on bomb-disposal crews or had joined the civil defence forces or the military. Others had gone overseas.

40. **Ms. Amarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that the national police force had 42 Women and Children's Bureaux and nearly 500 Women and Children's Police Desks, which were staffed mostly by female police officers. Relevant training was provided to the officers staffing those desks with the support of governmental and non-governmental agencies. Awareness-raising and crime-prevention programmes were being conducted with increasing frequency.

41. **Ms. Senaratne** (Sri Lanka) said that the Office of National Unity and Reconciliation and three government ministries focused on issues of national reconciliation. The Sinhalese and Tamil languages had equal status, and about 100 students were enrolled in a diploma programme on reconciliation and counselling. Students could take part in exchange programmes between the northern and southern parts of the country. In addition, a number of programmes promoted children's involvement in reconciliation efforts.

42. **Ms. Withanage** (Sri Lanka) said that human rights education had been included in school curricula. The Peace Education and Reconciliation Unit within the Ministry of Education had developed a programme to help prospective teachers improve their skills in a second national language. Student parliaments were active in grades 6 and up, and plans had been made to open a national school offering ethnic and trilingual education in Polonnaruwa District. Students from the north and the south had participated in an experience-sharing programme known as Friends of Two Cities.

43. Landmine-risk education had been offered with the support of UNICEF. As a result, the number of explosive devices that had been detected had risen by 15 per cent between 2015 and 2016.

44. **Ms. Senaratne** (Sri Lanka) said that although there was no central budget specifically earmarked for children, considerable sums had been allocated to the ministries and other institutions that dealt with children's affairs, including the National Child Protection Authority. Monies for health care, education and child protection were also allocated by the provincial authorities. The Government was willing to learn more about the principles of child-friendly budgeting, with a view to putting them into practice.

45. **Mr. Aryasinha** (Sri Lanka) said that the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka was an independent institution that had the resources to fulfil its mandate. Its independence had been strengthened by a recent amendment to the Constitution that limited the President's discretion in appointing the members of statutory bodies, including the Commission. A highly acclaimed human rights advocate had been appointed as Chair of the Commission in 2015. Officials regularly consulted the Commission in connection with human rights policy and reporting. In addition, the Commission submitted shadow reports to international human rights treaty bodies and issued key human rights directives.

46. The Commission had the authority to consider complaints of violations of fundamental rights and to monitor the welfare of persons in detention. In recent years, it had submitted a number of proposals to the Government, including with regard to amendments to article 16 of the Constitution. It had also recommended that the Ministry of Health should issue instructions to the effect that transgender persons should be allowed to choose the sex that appeared on their identity cards. The Commission had been involved in drafting an amendment to the Penal Code to criminalize hate speech, but the proposal had been withdrawn after concerns had been raised.

47. The Commission's budget for 2018 was 249 million Sri Lanka rupees, up from 168 million in 2015. In view of its performance, independence and resources, the Commission was certain to regain its A-status accreditation with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

48. With respect to the question concerning the detention of children under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, there had been one case in which a woman had been taken into custody along with her 13-year-old daughter, as the woman had had no one with whom to leave her child. The authorities had quickly resolved the problem by placing the child in a children's home. The child had not, in fact, been arrested under the Act. A committee appointed by the Prime Minister was currently considering a bill to introduce new counter-terrorism legislation that would include a number of additional safeguards.

49. **Ms. Jayasuriya** (Sri Lanka) said that an area of 135.4 $km^2$ had been cleared of landmines, an area of 25.5 $km^2$ was undergoing clearance and there had been no child casualties as a result of landmines in 2017.

50. Following the allegations made against Sri Lankan peacekeepers in Haiti, the Government had recalled the entire contingent of peacekeepers and had conducted an investigation in coordination with the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services. Three officers had been demoted or relieved of their duties and an ex gratia payment had been made in connection with a paternity claim. Candidates for service with peacekeeping operations were now vetted more carefully and a female contingent had been set up.

51. Under the Voluntary Social Service Organizations (Registration and Supervision) Act, any non-profit organization could register as a civil society organization, subject to

verification of its financial situation. Civil society organizations were closely involved in the treaty body reporting process and were consulted on policy development.

52. **Ms. Sandberg** asked what steps would be taken to improve the situation of children whose parents had migrated for work, leaving them alone or in the care of a relative or stranger. In addition, a number of children suffered mental trauma and disruption of their education as a result of alcohol and substance abuse by their parents, but the country's social services lacked the necessary resources and training to deal with cases of that kind.

53. With respect to the 2016–2018 Action Plan on Social Protection for Children, she enquired what outcomes had been achieved thus far, whether the measures being taken were sufficient and whether there were plans to scale up the initiative. She would also like to know who was responsible for deciding whether to place a child in foster care or in an institution; whether decisions of that kind were governed by legal requirements; whether there were plans to extend the "back to home" programme; and what steps were being taken to develop formal foster care programmes throughout the country. In addition, she wondered whether the committees responsible for reassessing placement situations conducted unannounced visits to institutions and whether they spoke to children without adults present. Lastly, she asked whether there were plans to facilitate the adoption process in order to reduce the number of children in residential care.

54. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she would appreciate more information on the health-care budget, the number and distribution of health workers, efforts to reduce regional disparities in the field of health and the relationship between the public and private health sectors.

55. Noting that the programme for the early detection of disabilities and the related care mechanism were available only to children between the ages of 5 and 19, she asked why children under the age of 5 were excluded; what measures had been taken to address demeaning attitudes towards children with disabilities; whether there was coordination between the various ministries and agencies responsible for supporting such children; how many children with disabilities there were in Sri Lanka; and whether orthopaedic services and devices were available.

56. She asked how problems relating to the advertising of breastmilk substitutes were being addressed, why weaning took place earlier for boys than for girls and whether there were programmes to combat anaemia and underweight. With regard to immunization, she enquired whether there were cold chain facilities in remote areas and whether remedial action was taken in the case of children who had not received the necessary vaccines.

57. She would appreciate more information on the provision of child mental health services and on the number and distribution of child psychologists throughout the country. It would also be useful to know whether the reproductive health programme for adolescents was being conducted in remote areas and what steps were being taken to prevent teenage pregnancy and to address the high suicide rate among young people. What efforts were being made to prevent the use of children in drug and alcohol trafficking, to rehabilitate the victims of such trafficking and to prevent the sale of drugs and alcohol to children?

58. With regard to poverty reduction, she enquired whether the programmes in place covered rural areas as well as towns, whether people in rural areas were aware of the programmes' existence and what criteria the beneficiaries must meet in order to obtain assistance under those programmes.

59. Lastly, she asked what steps were taken to manage the impacts of climate change and to assist victims of climate-related disasters; whether the use of glyphosate in tea plantations was prohibited or monitored; and what support was provided to children who were living with their mothers in prison.

60. **Ms. Otani**, welcoming the progress made in reducing the proportion of students who dropped out of school, said that the State party might wish to consider researching the factors that prompted students to drop out, such as pregnancy or disability. Noting that education was now compulsory up to the age of 16 but the minimum age for employment had not yet been raised from 14, she asked how the Government planned to enforce the new minimum school-leaving age; whether interim measures would be taken to enable children

under 16 who were currently in employment to attend school; and whether special measures would be taken with respect to children in street situations and children who had dropped out of school.

61. She asked how the funding allocated to initiatives to address regional disparities had been spent; whether that funding had led to budget cuts in other areas; and whether efforts had been made to increase the availability of qualified teachers, particularly in conflict-affected areas, as recommended by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its concluding observations on the State party's fifth periodic report (E/C.12/LKA/CO/5).

62. Lastly, with reference to the child-friendly approach introduced in schools, she wondered how issues such as discrimination and bullying were being addressed and whether there were plans to step up human rights education and promote children's participation as part of that approach.

63. **Mr. Gastaud** said that he would welcome more information on the implementation and outcomes of the Roadmap for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016 and the 2017 national policy on the elimination of child labour. He asked whether the country had enough properly trained labour inspectors; whether they conducted unannounced visits to ensure compliance with the ban on the employment of children in c tain occupations; and what penalties were imposed on employers or parents for breaching child labour legislation. It would be useful to know whether the child labour survey conducted in 2016 had covered all types of employment and all areas of the country. In addition, he would like to hear more about the measures taken to support children in street situations, the budget provided for such measures and the number of beneficiaries.

64. He would like more information on the nature, implementation and outcomes of the national strategy to combat human trafficking and on the number of prosecutions and convictions for human trafficking. How many complaints had been filed in relation to cybercrime and how had those complaints been handled?

65. He wondered whether the length of the prison sentences that could be imposed on minors was limited by law; whether children under 16 could be sentenced to imprisonment; and whether there were plans to introduce alternatives to detention for minors. He wished to know when the bill to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years would be adopted; whether the number of juvenile courts would be increased and, if so, when; and whether there were plans to establish child-only detention facilities. He would welcome clarification as to the status of the various bodies established to deal with cases of missing children.

66. With regard to child soldiers, he asked whether the Government had conducted a survey to assess how many former child soldiers had not yet been rehabilitated; whether the delegation could comment on reports that a number of adults who were former child soldiers were being detained under counter-terrorism legislation; and what measures had been taken to prosecute those suspected of recruiting child soldiers. How was a person's age verified prior to recruitment into the armed forces if he or she did not have a birth certificate? Which legislative provisions prohibited the recruitment of children into the armed forces, non-State armed groups or security forces? Lastly, he enquired what steps had been taken to ensure that the training of the Cadet Corps did not include the use of firearms, as recommended by the Committee in paragraph 27 of its concluding observations on the State party's initial report under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC/C/OPAC/LKA/CO/1).

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*